

# Hanford Openness Workshops *Fact Sheet*

## Hanford Openness Workshops

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*The Hanford Openness  
Workshops are a  
collaborative effort  
among the U.S.  
Department of Energy-  
Richland Operations  
Office, the Consortium  
for Risk Evaluation  
with Stakeholder  
Participation, the  
Oregon Office of  
Energy, the Washington  
Department of Ecology,  
and regional Tribal  
and citizen  
representatives.*

## Background

It is the mission of the Hanford Openness Workshops (HOW) to resolve issues impeding the availability of information important to public health, the environment, understanding and decision making at the US Department of Energy's (DOE) Hanford nuclear site in south-eastern Washington state. This fact sheet outlines the history of openness at Hanford, as well as the Workshops' history and key recommendations.

### The Beginnings of Openness

The concepts of openness began at Hanford in 1994 when DOE, Hanford's regulators, stakeholders and affected tribes convened Hanford Summit II to focus on Hanford cleanup. The DOE Secretary, governors of Washington and Oregon, and chairmen of the Nez Perce Tribe, the Yakama Nation and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation attended. This diverse collection of leaders prepared a summary document of initiatives upon which all the parties agreed. A major initiative was openness. Then-Secretary O'Leary endorsed these proposals and committed DOE to support them. In the years since, succeeding DOE Secretaries have reaffirmed this commitment and the Department has begun restructuring the ways in which it approaches and manages information and set goals for becoming a more open and accessible agency.

### A Legacy of Secrecy

The task ahead is daunting. DOE has a backlog of tens of millions of pages of classified records. In the first days of the Atomic Energy Commission, nearly all documents were "born classified." Today that has changed, but a huge backlog of decaying documents, video, film and other records remain. Much of it is essential for making decisions to safely and cost-effectively clean up Hanford, but is still inaccessible today. For example, classified records are mixed with unclassified but otherwise restricted records containing sensitive information and private details of individuals. Sorting this out will take time, staff and money. Perhaps more importantly, the Department has yet to fully complete the cultural change required to go from an agency shrouded in necessary secrecy to one used to operating openly.

### Workshops Address Barriers

In 1997, the Oregon Office of Energy (OOE) facilitated the creation of the Hanford Openness Workshops. The Consortium for Risk Evaluation with Stakeholder Participation (CRESP), DOE's Richland Operations Office, the Washington Department of Ecology, and OOE developed an implementation plan. This coordinating group proceeded to work collaboratively with regional citizen and tribal representatives to forge agreement among Hanford's stakeholders and assist DOE in moving forward its commitments to openness.

## Bigger than Declassification

Although initially focused on declassification, Workshop participants soon agreed that declassification was only one component of openness. Ultimately, openness is a whole structure in which access to information enables citizens to contribute to decisions meaningfully and powerfully. The participants organized in working groups around key issues, to evaluate current conditions and provide DOE useful recommendations for improvement.

## HOW Recommendations

The first series of workshops took place in 1997 and 1998, the second in 1999. Participants made these key recommendations, among others:

- Continue the Workshops to build trust, identify and clarify priorities for declassification, ensure openness is a long-term commitment, resolve problems and support continued funding for openness, participation and declassification.
- Include in contracts incentives for achieving openness goals and penalties for not achieving these goals. Also include incentives and penalties for compliance with treaties and other federal obligations to tribes and tribal nations.
- Use the HOW's draft evaluation plan and positive/negative examples to develop more useful and comprehensive public involvement evaluation mechanisms.
- Suspend or revoke contracts if a contractor has engaged in "whistleblower" reprisals or maintained a hostile environment to employees reporting concerns.
- Provide ongoing training for supervisors and workers. Hold managers accountable for reprisals. Provide new employee orientation on openness.
- Reverse current DOE policy of reimbursing contractors for litigation costs.
- Simplify employee concerns processes, paying attention to their "trackability."
- To aid future declassification, develop policies and marking systems that identify the sensitive information in newly-created documents and the laws that apply.
- Ensure declassification and openness policies apply to all contractors and Hanford-related records, including those held, administered or controlled by contractors.
- Include a plan for ultimate public release in all DOE document reviews, including those conducted as part of legal processes.
- Increase the number of documents and finding aids electronically available. All released records should be electronically searchable and available via the Internet.
- Institute a mechanism by which the public can conduct full text searches on document abstracts. Abstracts reveal more about a document's content than do titles.
- Develop and implement systems to perform "data mining"—looking for patterns of information relevant to a variety of searches—on DOE documents.
- Recognize and implement the government-to-government relationship between the United States and the tribes reflected in the DOE American Indian Policy.
- Convene a meeting with senior managers and the HOW to discuss and strategize how to achieve the goals delineated in the HOW reports.

For more information, see the *Hanford Openness Workshops 1998 and 1999 Reports*, available via the HOW address or electronically at the HOW web site.

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